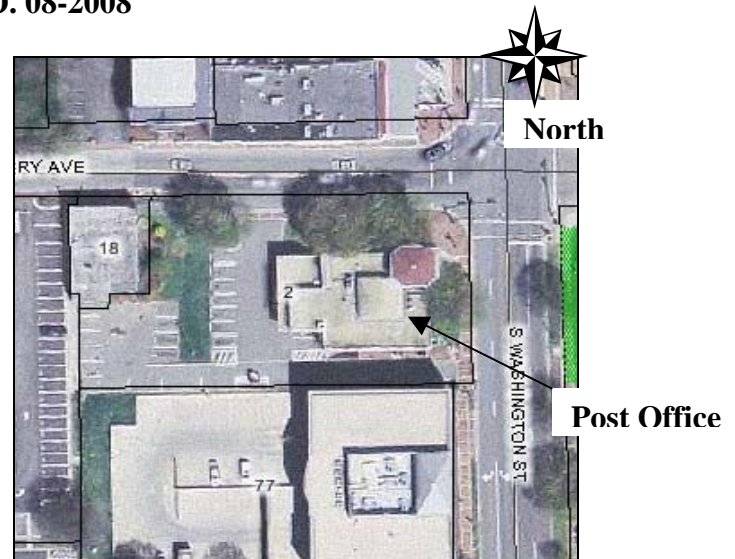


**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**for
September 18, 2008
MEETING NO. 08-2008**

APPLICATION:	Courtesy Review
ADDRESS:	2 West Montgomery
ACCEPTED:	September 2, 2008
45 DAY LIMIT:	October 24, 2008
OWNER:	United States GSA
REQUEST:	Rear addition, roof addition and infill construction
STAFF:	Jeff Winstel



City of Rockville (Applicant) is requesting a Courtesy Review of the proposed massing of an addition to the existing former Post Office building and a new infill building. The massing of the proposed project has been as accepted by the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) as a condition of perpetual preservation easement required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for transfer of federally owned National Register listed property to a non-federal entity. The City of Rockville is considering acquiring the property for adaptive re-use as the City of Rockville Police Department.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed massing of the additions and the in-fill annex, given the following findings:

DRAFT MOTION OF APPROVAL:

The proposed massing for the additions to the 1939 Post Office and the in-fill construction of an annex building within the environmental setting is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the City of Rockville Technical Guides.

Construction of a second floor addition, creating an approximately 1,855 gross square feet expansion of the existing roof monitor is necessary to accommodate the additional square footage and construction of a new fire egress stairs and elevator in the southwest corner, and is consistent with:

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standard #9:** New additions and exterior alterations shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work will be

differentiated from the old and is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property, and

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standard #10:** New additions shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

The proposed addition is also consistent with:

- **City of Rockville Technical Guidelines 4: New Additions,** in that the bulk of the addition is on the rear elevation and all of it is on the two secondary elevations, (rear and south side), and the existing roof line, trim lines and massing guide the design of the addition, and the design of the new addition does not overwhelm the existing building or its neighbors.

With the following condition:

- The proposed corrugated metal siding is replaced with a lightweight, contemporary but compatible masonry product that is consistent with the existing materials, scale, color and overall architectural character of the original post office building.

Construction of a two-story, freestanding annex building on the rear portion of the site along the northern and western property line is consistent with

- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation #9** New construction shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of the historic property to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment, and
- **City of Rockville Technical Guide # 5 New Construction,** being of similar scale and massing to other surrounding buildings.

BACKGROUND

Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.

- ✓ **Contributing**
- ☐ **Non-Contributing**

Significance:

The subject 1939 WPA Post Office was designated a Rockville Historic District in 1979 and listed in the National Register of Historic places as a contributing resource in the Courthouse Square Historic District in 1986.

Background History:

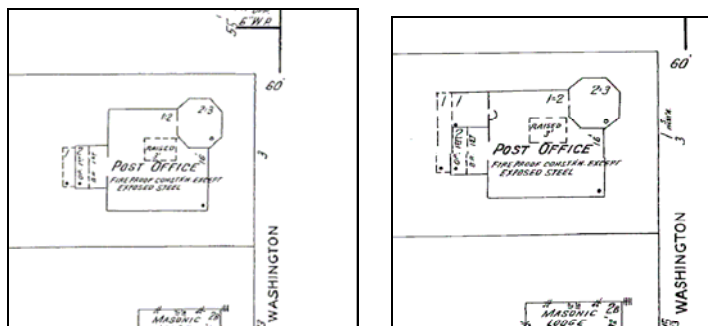
The 1939 Rockville Post Office was designated as a contributing resource in the Courthouse Square National Register district for its architectural significance and historic association with government. This was Rockville's first permanent post office.

Federal postal service began in "Montgomery Courthouse" (Rockville's first name) in 1794. The road from Fredericktown (Frederick) to Georgetown was a "post road", and stages were used to haul the mail. Rockville's post office was located in a variety of buildings for the next 144 years. Space was leased from different storeowners until the need was recognized for a permanent post office building; Rockville's growth during the "building boom" of 1890 to 1905 had increased its residential and business population.

The Post Office was a Works Progress Administration project, designed by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon and Architect R. Stanley-Brown. The project was dedicated on July 22, 1939 with a parade and the building officially opened for business on September 5 of that year. (MHT M: 26/11/2). One of three "New Deal" federally funded post-offices built in Montgomery County, the dressed gray limestone and classical lines of the building is reflective of the 1931 County Courthouse further east on Montgomery Avenue. (*Places From The Past*, 2001). The Historic American Building Survey (HABS) recorded the building in 1985.

The Post Office occupies a prominent corner in downtown Rockville and is characterized by an octagonal two-story tower with tile roof and 6/6 sash windows. The entry to the post office is through the two large archways, one facing West Montgomery Avenue and the other South Washington Street. The building is clad with rectangular panels of dressed Indiana Limestone and is characterized by restrained classical elements, such as molding strips, Doric pilasters, and 12/12 first floor symmetrically placed windows.

Recessed arched niches are located at the far ends of the West Montgomery Avenue façade, and the South Washington Street façade, and the northeast side of the octagonal tower faces the northeast corner of the two streets' intersection. A light buff colored glazed brick characterizes the secondary elevations. The current configuration of the canopy and loading bays on the west (rear) elevation were constructed between 1949 and 1960, as per the Sanborn Map images.



1949 Sanborn

1960 Sanborn

Note difference in rear loading area

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Property Area: 27,288 square feet

Structure Area: 10,608 square feet.

Zone: TC-1

Development Standards: The Town Center I zone has a minimum lot area requirement of 10,000 square feet and no nonresidential side and rear yard setback requirements except that they must be 10 feet, if provided. The minimum width at the front lot line is 100 feet and the maximum height limit is 45 feet. The proposed project appears to meet the development standards for the existing zone of TC-1. The property is recommended for MXNC zone, which has similar basic development standards.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT:

The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.

The City of Rockville has the opportunity to acquire the 1939 Rockville Post Office from the Federal Government, General Services Administration (GSA) for Homeland Security related use. The property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. As per 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800.9c(3) the transfer or sale of a historic property to a non-Federal party may be considered to have no adverse effect on the property where “adequate restrictions or conditions are included [in the transfer instrument] to ensure preservation of the property’s significant historic features.” The transfer of historic federal properties to non-Federal entities may be determined to be a “No Adverse Effect” through Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, if the transfer includes a preservation easement that

- Encumbers title to the property with a clear and enforceable preservation easement or other covenant,
- Is applicable to those aspects of the property that make it eligible for inclusion in the National Register,
- Designates a person who has agreed to hold the covenant or easement, and
- Is in perpetuity.

The City of Rockville has negotiated a preservation easement with GSA and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). MHT, like all State Historic Preservation Offices, administers the Federal government Section 106 program for the state. MHT is also typically the easement holder for historic federal properties in Maryland that are transferred out of federal ownership. Included in the terms and conditions of the agreed upon easement are the attached Adaptive Reuse Plan by WGM Architects & Interiors (Attachment 1). Also attached is a letter from the State Historic Preservation Officer Dr. J. Rodney Little to Rockville City Manager Scott Ullery, dated August 26, 2008, approving “the preliminary/schematic rehabilitation scheme. ...depicted

in the Architectural/ Engineering drawings dated May 1, 2008, prepared by WGM Architects” (Attachment 2).

The City of Rockville pursued development of the rehabilitation and reuse plans congruent with the easement negotiations in order to insure the building and site could be rehabilitated for use as the Rockville Police Station, *prior* to acquiring the property and committing financial resources to the project. The city has received approval of the attached plans from MHT, which fulfills GSA’s Section 106 obligation, if the property is transferred to the City of Rockville. The HDC is being asked for review and comment on the massing concept represented by the attached plans, in particular the additions on the Old Post Office and siting and massing of the proposed annex building, in advance of submitting final plans to MHT and the HDC for a Certificate of Approval.

The proposed project seeks to adaptively re-use the 1939 Rockville Post Office for the City of Rockville Police Department. The proposed use will require the addition of an elevator/stairwell shaft and the insertion an extra second floor level in the Post Office, which will be accommodated by increasing the roof height in the rear of the building, behind the monitor feature. New construction will be minimally apparent on the roof behind the central square light monitor element, and on the west elevation (rear) and the south elevation, which faces a small driveway that abuts the Post Office and a modern 3-story office building. The two principle facades of the Post Office will not be impacted, as the rooftop construction is set back out of sight from views of the building from the street.

The environmental setting of the Post Office will be changed by the addition of a new two-story L-shaped building to be located in the back northwest corner of the parcel. Currently this area contains two asphalt parking lots with a small concrete retaining wall separating the upper, or Post Office level from the lower elevation of the southwest corner.

Addition to 1939 Post Office

The proposed addition will alter the secondary elevations (rear/west and south elevations) and the existing roof monitor. The character-defining monitor feature is 3 feet in height, clad in cooper sheeting and contains a row of four square 12-light vent windows on each side. Historically, the monitor provided light into the central workspace where the mail was sorted.

The rear or west elevation of the monitor feature will be preserved in place as an interior architectural feature. The new monitor will extend out from this elevation. If the proposed new construction was reversed, the monitor feature could be returned to its original conditions, consistent with Secretary of the Interior’s Standard #10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.



East façade, monitor feature not visible



Northeast corner of façade, monitor feature behind tower



One of few views of monitor from street or ground level

Rear elevation, taken from west boundary line of Burbanks, with zoom lens

The extended monitor will be clad in Kalwall, a translucent glazing material that will bring light into the interior space. The material is clearly different from the windows on the historic section

of the monitor, but allows for additional light for the interior, making the building more “green”. Cooper cladding will be used above and below the light panels.



Kalwall Installation Examples
Leonardtown Elementary School, Leonardtown, Maryland

Additional new construction attached to the Post Office consists of the elevator tower in the southwest corner and additional height built on top of the rear appendage. The majority of this addition will be visible from the rear, or west elevation and the south elevation. The height of the elevator tower will be the same as the height of the historic monitor and the proposed monitor addition. The wall planes of this feature above the principle roofline will be clad in corrugated metal sheeting. A new pre-cast belt course will delineate the upper and lower levels and the lower section of the walls will be clad in brick. The existing brick chimneystack will be kept in place, surrounded by new construction, and extended two feet in height. According to the plans, the stack extension will be clad with corrugated metal sheeting.



Rear elevation, southwest corner where elevator tower is to be located

Staff has requested the corrugated metal be changed to another type of material. The applicant has agreed to change the material, but needs something that is lightweight. Although corrugated metal would clearly differentiate the new construction from the historic, and would have a contemporary feel, staff feels it is not compatible with the formal, classical character of the design and the dressed limestone cladding of the historic building.

Corrugated metal is also suggested for the delivery bays in the rear of the building. Currently, these areas are in-filled with painted plywood sheeting. The corrugated metal is consistent with the more warehouse/industrial function of loading and unloading bulk materials, but would have a much more reflective quality than the historic material and would call attention to itself. Again, staff recommends the use of a more non-descript material that would have visual characteristics similar to the existing brick.

A canvas awning will be attached to the building over the exterior descending stairwell on the south elevation. A smaller canvas awning will be attached to the wall to cover the entrance to the stairwell. These are needed for code compliance.

Annex Building

The roof of the proposed new building will be lower than the parapet level of the Post Office. The West Montgomery Avenue elevation of the new building will not project beyond the West Montgomery façade of the Post Office. The Police Station annex building will be located behind the Post Office and will be consistent with the height, massing, and materials of nearby buildings and be consistent with the overall density patterns of the Town Center area.



View of site for new annex building, facing southwest



View of site for new annex, from south Washington Street sidewalk

MATERIALS:

The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.

The design of the additions and the infill annex building is compatible with the existing historic structure and the surrounding built environment. The addition will be located in the rear and on the south façade, both of which are secondary elevations. The additional height added to the historic Post Office will be located, for the most part, behind the 3 feet-tall monitor. The monitor is a character defining historic feature, but is located in the center of the roof and set back far enough from the roof-wall junction of the principle facades that it is barely visible from street level. The use of brick on the rear addition is compatible with the historic material, provided it is a light colored brick that has a different texture or size. As previously mentioned, staff does not recommend the use of corrugated metal siding.

COMPLIANCE WITH GUIDELINES:

The proposed massing for the Post Office addition and the annex in-fill construction is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards #9 and #10, and the City of Rockville Technical Guidelines #4 and #5.

Attachments:

Courtesy Review Staff Report
Old Post Office Addition
September 11, 2008

Attachment 1: Adaptive Reuse of Former United States Post Office for the City of Rockville
Police Department, 2 West Montgomery Avenue, WGM Architects & Interiors

Attachment 2: Correspondence from State Historic Preservation Office, Dr. J. Rodney Little to
City Manager, Scott Ullery, dated August 26, 2008

Statement of Applicant